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Review of Capabilities and Solutions on Rural Tourism Development in District of Kahak in Qom Province

Simin Tavallaei

Prof. in Geography & Urban Planning, Faculty of Geographical Sciences, Kharazmi University

Vahid Riyahi*

Assistant Prof. in Geography & Urban Planning, Faculty of Geographical Sciences, Kharazmi University

Hasan Afrakhte

Prof. in Geography & Rural Planning, Faculty of Geographical Sciences, Kharazmi University

Ahmad Shabani

MA in Geography & Rural Planning, Faculty of Geographical Sciences, Kharazmi University

Received: 19/04/2011 Accepted: 13/02/2013

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Rural tourism in Qom province – that have special feature of religious tourism - the may seem an unusual phenomenon. But the province with 93.88 percent of urbanization, after Tehran province has the second rank It is as a metropolis with 6 percent growth that has urbanization problems including traffic and air pollution and marginalized and informal settlements where may affect rural tourism. Kahak District of Qom province has villa villages (Vashnoveh, Karnejegan and Fordo) for tourism purposes. The present paper survey method is a library and field studies, with regard to participants views in three groups (tourists, officials, families living in). We first determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in rural parts of Kahak (Vashnoveh, Karnejegan and Fordo) for Rural Tourism by the SWOT method. Tourism development strategy has provided the target villages. Community households in the survey included 874 residents, more than 1000 tourists and 25 persons are responsible for tourism in the area. Sampling method of Cochran helped select 267 people and 306 rural residents and 25 tourists as statistical population. Research findings indicate a lack of necessary infrastructure including residential locations, catering, recreation and tourism development in the field of

*E-mail: riyahi@khu.ac.ir

Tel: 09123002385

management of weaknesses. Review and analysis of the results from increasing environmental damage due to inadequate infrastructure and poor agents to invest in this sector for the use of positive effects in promoting rural tourism is a tale of rural development.

Rural tourism may have significant economic effects such as preventing the flow of rural migration, raising income levels of rural households and creating demand for agricultural products and handicrafts. In Kahak (Qom province), three target villages have the necessary capabilities in the field of tourism, but have been unable to benefit from tourism in creating jobs, increasing income and building service locations. It is while; tourism is the most suitable choice for rural development. This is especially important when the tourists are residing in the second homes during the warm seasons. This provides an opportunity for tourists who plan to strengthen rural areas, while there are no negative environmental effects. This study is seeking to answer these questions: Do we have target villages foundations for environmental and rural tourism development that can require us to attract tourists? Is there any relationship between lack of appropriate infrastructure (including roads and access to residential and entertainment venues) and the amount of tourists? To answer questions, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the area were assessed by two internal and external factors using the SWOT analysis model.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to examine the hospitality and the foundations of rural tourism in the three interested villages of Kahak to provide strategies for tourism development in this area. Hence, information was provided through observation, questionnaires and interviews. The population of the study was more than 10,000 thousand people (tourists annually three villages) and rural population, which has 874 households, and 25 persons of authorities. Population samples were studied in three groups: tourists with 306 people, 267 households living in villages and 25 patients and associated persons in charge. Sampling in the study was Cochrane formula. Questionnaires were distributed among the tourists using random sampling and among households living in targeted areas by qualitative methods. After completing the questionnaire, the SWOT model was used to develop strategies and provide solutions. In this model, four concepts of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats from the main foundation of the model. they are the internal (domestic) and external (foreign) fields that were studied on rural tourism.

Results and Discussion

Internal and external factors affecting rural tourism in the study area (Tables 5 and 6 which are provided) shows that among the internal factors that influence rural tourism, there are nine strong points against 12 weaknesses. On external factors influence, there are 8 opportunities against the 8 threats. Total of 17 strengthes and opportunities are considered as an advantage. Up to 21 threats are as disadvantage to pull constraints for developing rural tourism. In Table 7, the total weight for each of the factors, were set based on questionnaires frequencies, as well as weight and concepts from the viewpoint of the four respondents. Finally, in Table 8, there is the

priority of each effective internal and external factors; Table 7 shows that the most important strengths is the most beautiful landscapes. The weakness is the poor inadequate facilities and services. Increasing and becoming more motivated to travel to the villages is the main opportunities and environmental damage is the main threats of the area.

Conclusion

The main result is the necessity for more researches in rural tourism planning in Iran. The necessity is more in some villages like those studied in this article. Tourism development in the study area can be at two levels of long-term and short term.

1-long-term programs includes:

- To create and develop infrastructures such as accommodation and welfare facilities, catering facilities and service facilities.
- To prepare a comprehensive tourism plan and set plans for developing tourism and attracting tourists, which is proportional to the ecological conditions of the region and prevent environmental degradation.
- Provide a suitable ground for private sector investment in regional tourism activities.

2 - Short-term programs includes:

- Tourist attractions and advertising recognition to mark them with different methods, like TV shows in the province and marketing to attract tourists and become a regional pole of rural tourism in the province.
- Holding training classes for the villagers interested in interacting with tourists, tourism and education.
- Create partnerships in rural areas for rural development.
- Revival of handicrafts and production of local handicrafts for offering to tourists using the experiences of people with skills.
- Install warning signs and collect accurate and automated garbage and rural sanitation to prevent environmental pollution.

Keywords: *Kahak, Qom Province, Rural Tourism, Sustainable Rural Development, Sustainable Tourism, SWOT Model.*

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